4.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

This section discusses the existing onshore (terrestrial) and in-water (marine) habitats and biological resources that are within the Project region and site. The descriptions are based on literature sources and on the results of Project-specific field surveys. Information obtained from discussions with resource agencies, an analysis of pertinent regulatory requirements, and an assessment of the impacts of the proposed Project on the existing habitats and biological resources is also in this section.

4.3.1 Environmental Setting

Onshore Habitats and Resources

The onshore corridor initiates at a manhole in the Sandspit Beach parking lot of Montaña de Oro State Park. The Sandspit Beach parking lot is a paved area providing public access to the sandspit that extends to the north toward Morro Rock. From the parking lot, the onshore corridor follows an existing conduit system that extends inland approximately 10.5 miles (16.9 km) along the ridgeline through Montaña de Oro State Park, south of Los Osos Valley Road, toward the city of San Luis Obispo. The onshore corridor terminates at the AT&T San Luis Obispo Cable Station near the intersection of Foothill Boulevard and Los Osos Valley Road. Topography along the existing conduit system consists of rolling hills, steep slopes, and coastal dunes. Elevations range from sea level at the beaches within Montaña de Oro State Park to peaks at over 700 feet (214 m) above sea level in the hills adjacent to Los Osos Valley Road in San Luis Obispo.

For the purposes of this impact analysis, the onshore Project site is defined as the Sandspit Beach parking lot, the areas directly in and adjacent to the AT&T Right-of-Way (ROW), ROW access routes, and the AT&T San Luis Obispo Cable Station and surrounding habitat areas along the cable route within Montaña de Oro State Park, Los Osos, and San Luis Obispo. The following description of the terrestrial habitats and resources of the Project site is based on a review of relevant literature and data collected during Project-specific field surveys (Morro Group 2008a). The California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) was also queried for records of special-status species within the Morro Bay South and San Luis Obispo 7.5 minute quadrangle maps. Table 4.3-1 lists the terrestrial field surveys that were conducted at the Project site for the purpose of identifying the plant communities and wildlife habitat areas, determining typical species associated with the different plant communities, identifying and assessing potentially impacted habitats, and documenting occurrences of special-status

species and habitats. A protocol-level Morro shoulderband snail (MSS) Habitat Assessment was also conducted within and adjacent to the Project site (Morro Group 2008b).

A peer review of the *AT&T Asia America Gateway Terrestrial Route Biological Resources Survey Report* (Morro Group 2008a) that was submitted with the Project application was also completed. The following discussion of biological resources within and adjacent to the Project site is based on the AT&T's Biological Resources Survey Report (BRSR) (see Appendix F). Plant communities described in the BRSR were confirmed during reconnaissance surveys of the Project site on August 4 and 5, 2008.

Table 4.3-1. Biological Field Survey Dates

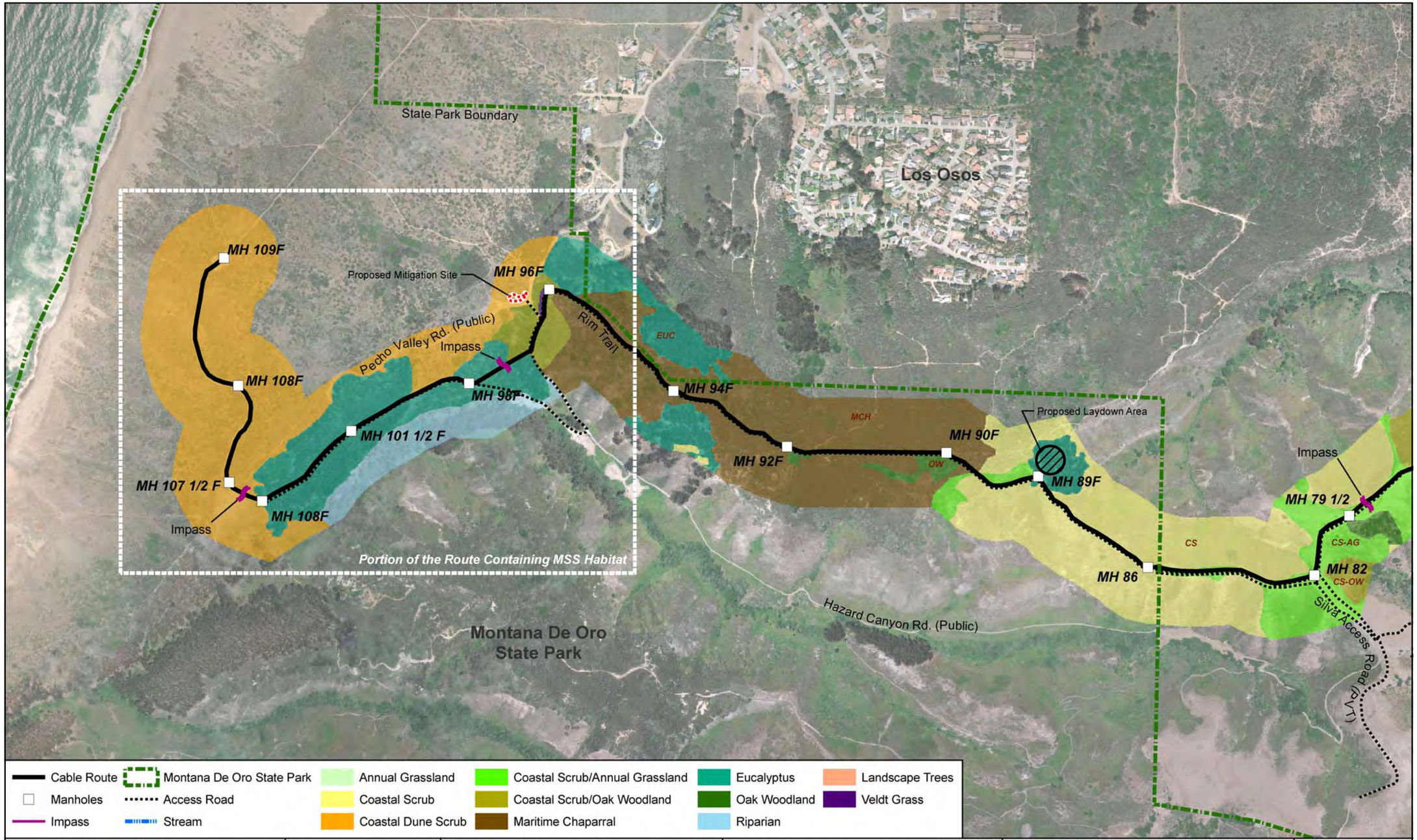
Field Survey Type	Biologists	Dates Conducted
Botanical Surveys	Morro Group	May-June, 2008
General Wildlife Surveys	Morro Group	May-June, 2008
Morro Shoulderband Snail Habitat Assessment	Morro Group	May, 2008
Reconnaissance Surveys	Padre/Morro Group	August 4-5, 2008

The categories of special-status species are listed in Tables 4.3-3 and 4.3-5, and the CNDDB report is in Appendix F. Special-status taxa that are known to exist or have the potential to exist within the Project area were also identified through a review of relevant literature (California Native Plant Society 2008; and Zeiner *et al*. 1988; 1990a, b), and previous biological studies in the area (Morro Group 2008a, b).

Plant Communities and Habitat Types

Focused botanical and wildlife field surveys were conducted by Morro Group biologists in May and June 2008, within the appropriate blooming period for the many plant species in the California floristic province. Based on the results of the recent and historical biological field surveys, maps of plant communities occurring in the Project area were generated by the Morro Group (Figures 4.3-1 to 4.3-4).

The Project site encompasses eight generalized plant communities: central dune scrub, central maritime chaparral, coastal scrub, riparian habitat, coast live oak woodland, eucalyptus woodland, annual grassland, and ruderal/disturbed habitat. Classification of these habitat types is based primarily on Holland (1986) with several modifications to



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Asia America Gateway
Terrestrial Conduit Route
Biological Assessment Report

Biological Resources

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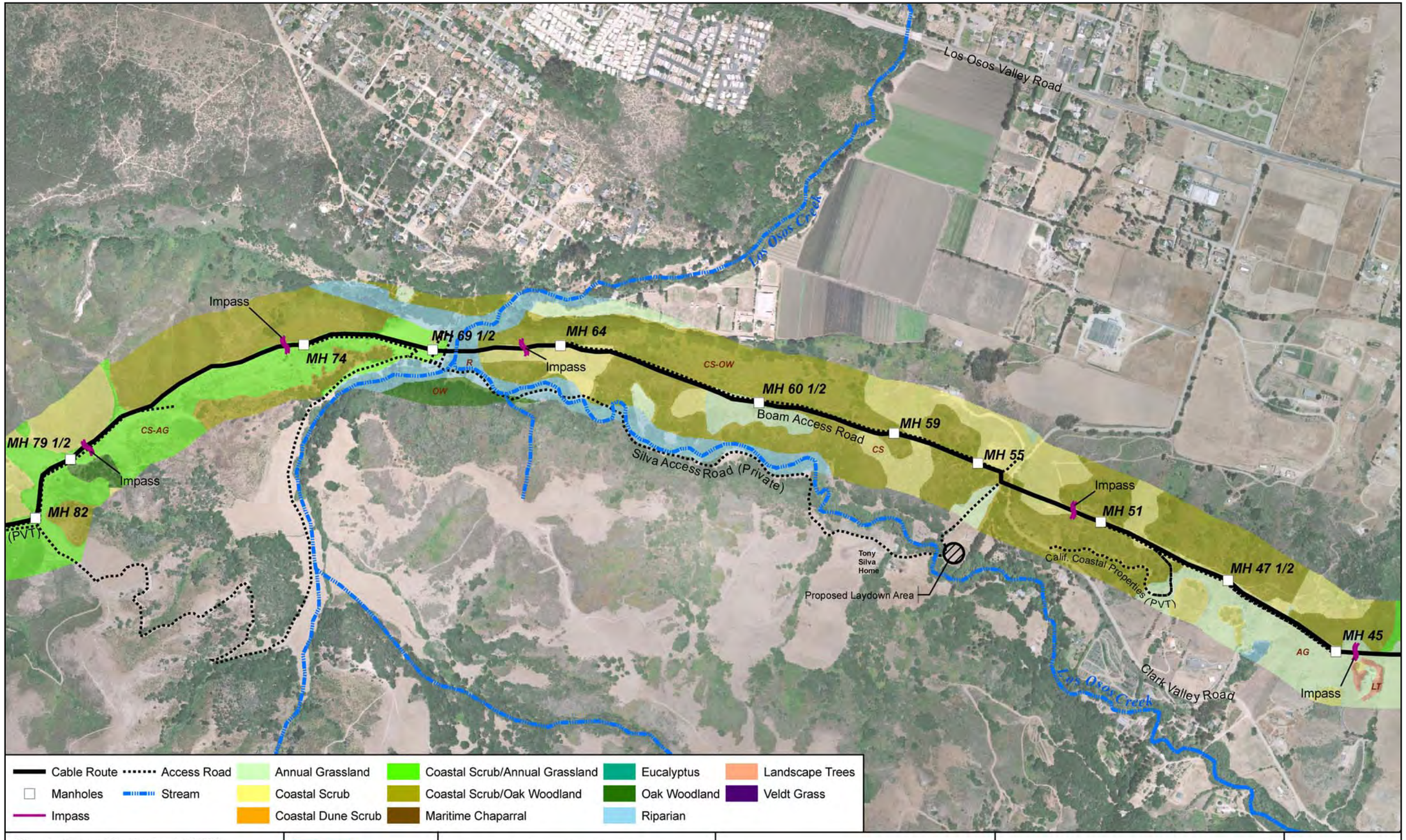
Los Osos Valley Road
Los Osos Creek
Impass
MH 74
MH 69 1/2
MH 64
Impass
R
OW
CS-OW
MH 60 1/2
Boam Access Road
CS
MH 59
MH 55
Impass
MH 51
MH 79 1/2
Impass
CS-AG
MH 82
(PVT)
Silva Access Road (Private)
Tony Silva Home
Proposed Laydown Area
Calif. Coastal Properties (PVT)
MH 47 1/2
MH 45
AG
LT
Impass
Clark Valley Road
Los Osos Creek
Cable Route
Access Road
Manholes
Stream
Impass
Annual Grassland
Coastal Scrub
Coastal Dune Scrub
Coastal Scrub/Annual Grassland
Coastal Scrub/Oak Woodland
Maritime Chaparral
Eucalyptus
Oak Woodland
Riparian
Landscape Trees
Veldt Grass
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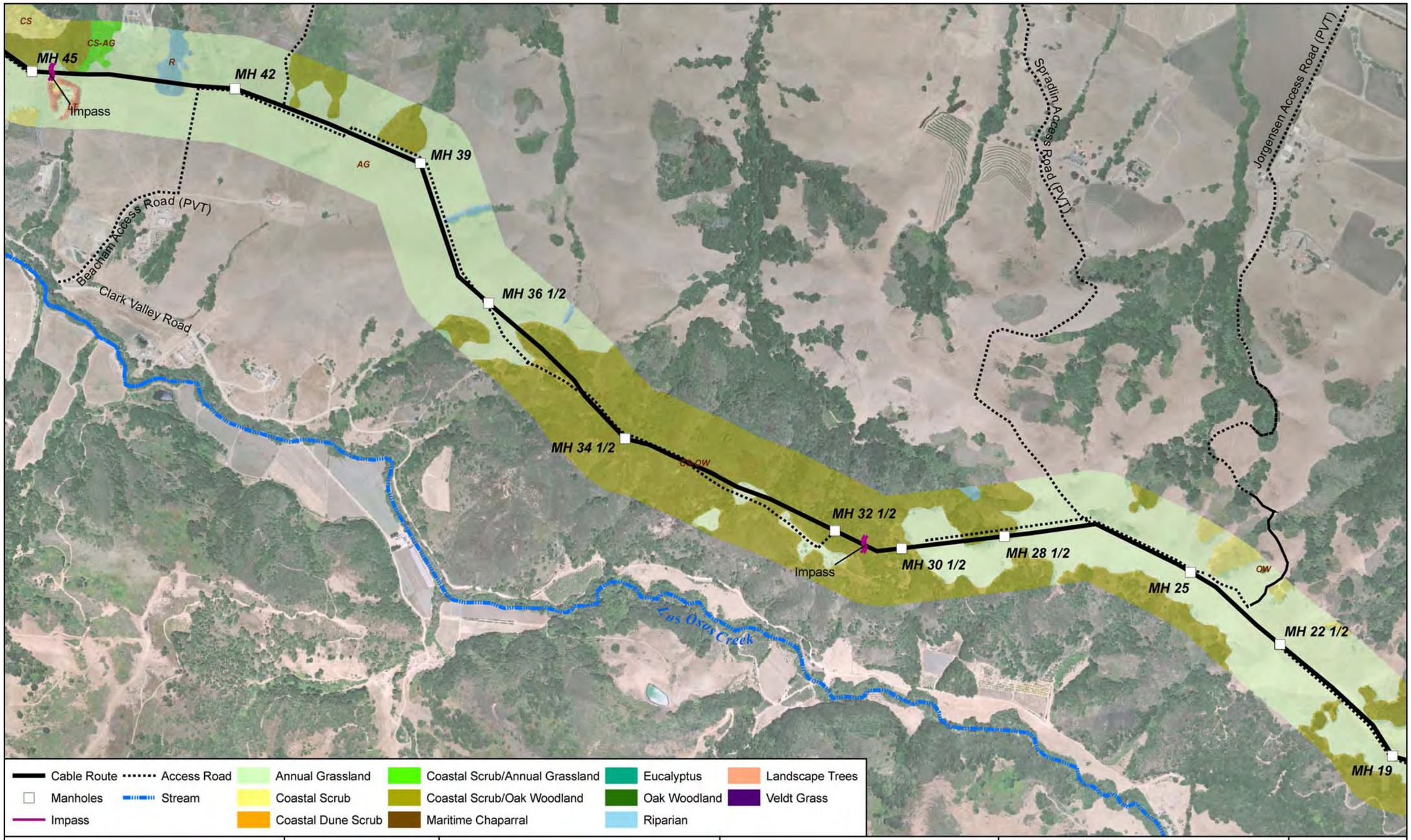
CS
CS-AG
R
MH 45
MH 42
Impass
AG
MH 39
Beacham Access Road (PVT)
Clark Valley Road
MH 36 1/2
MH 34 1/2
CS-OW
MH 32 1/2
Impass
MH 30 1/2
MH 28 1/2
MH 25
OW
MH 22 1/2
MH 19
Spradlin Access Road (PVT)
Jorgensen Access Road (PVT)
Los Osos Creek
Cable Route
Access Road
Manholes
Stream
Impass
Annual Grassland
Coastal Scrub
Coastal Dune Scrub
Coastal Scrub/Annual Grassland
Coastal Scrub/Oak Woodland
Maritime Chaparral
Eucalyptus
Oak Woodland
Riparian
Landscape Trees
Veldt Grass
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